

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this Application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed on September 10, 2003. Claims 1-7 are pending in the Application and stand rejected. Claim 3 is amended, Claims 1, 2, and 4-7 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, and new Claims 8-16 are added by the present amendment.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy of an interview extended to Applicants' representative on February 24, 2004. During the interview, an explanation was given as to the advantageous features of the present invention in comparison to conventional devices.¹ In view of the discussion during the personal interview and the teaching of the cited prior art of record, although an agreement was not reached, the Examiner acknowledged in the interview summary (form PTO 413) the deficiency of the outstanding Office Action in view of the fact that the cited references do not disclosed the claimed range of α -rays.

The Abstract of the Specification was objected to because of several informalities. Applicants have herein submitted a revised Abstract to comply with that objection and respectfully request reconsideration of the same.

Claims 1-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP58-218143 in view of JP08-130237 and further in view of applicant's admitted prior art. In view of the results of the personal interview and cancellation of Claims 1, 2, and 4-7, Applicants

¹ In the application of heat for the purpose of drying during the manufacturing process of semiconductor devices, e.g., coating of a photosensitive resin as an etching resist on a semiconductor wafer and etching the uncoated area, conventional metallic heaters comprising a resistance heating element have several disadvantages, including, but not limited to, the use of thick, heavy, and bulky heater plates, creating an insurmountable time-resolved temperature control problem because of the thermal inertia of the large heater plate. These temperature control problems, although unexplainable, are also observed in conventional ceramic heaters that comprise a non-oxide substrate board with a resistance heater (Specification, page 1, line 18 – page 2, line 19). The inventors of the present invention have found that the cause of the temperature control problem in ceramic heaters lies in the amount of α -ray radiation from the ceramic substrate and that, by controlling the level of those α -rays below a given value, it is possible to control the temperature of the heater accurately as a function of time (*Id.*, page 2, line 21 – page 3, line 28).

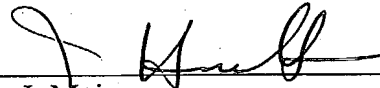
respectfully submit that the outstanding rejection of Claims 1-7 are now moot and kindly request their withdrawal.

Applicants have also herein submitted new dependent Claims 8-16, depending from the presently amended independent Claim 3. Support for the newly submitted claims is found in Applicants' Specification as follows: as to Claim 8, on page 11, lines 4-5; as to Claim 9, on page 12, lines 6-8; as to Claim 10, on page 19, lines 19-23; as to Claim 11, on page 11, lines 14-17; as to Claim 12, on page 7, lines 27-30; as to Claim 13, on page 19, lines 9-12; as to Claim 14, on page 6, lines 2-9; as to Claim 15, on page 6, lines 11-14; and as to Claim 16, on page 7, lines 9-10. By virtue of the recitation of Claim 3 and the results of the personal interview, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 8-16 are distinguished over the cited prior art of record at least because of their dependency on Claim 3.

Based at least on the foregoing reasons, Applicants believe the present application is in condition for allowance and respectfully solicit an early Notice of Allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Registration No. 25,599
Robert T. Pous
Registration No. 29,099
Attorneys of Record

James D. Hamilton
Registration No. 28,421

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/03)

I:\ATTY\MQM\22's\221158USAM.DOC